(d) the details of the fleet expansion programme planned by Air India?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) At present there is no proposal to expand Air India fleet to cover additional destinations;

(b) Air India is presently operating to USA, Europe, Moscow, Japan, Hongkong, South East Asia, Africa and Gulf;

(c) Air India has not planned any new services in the near future due to capacity constraints;

(d) Does not arise.

Caribjet Deal by AI

3812. SHRIMATI JAYAPRADA NAHATA:

SHRI AMAR SINGH:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news appearing in the Pioneer dated 30th March , 2000 under the Caption 'After Caribjet, AIMD faces another probe'; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof including the loss suffered by AI as a result of the action taken by its MD for appointing a consultant?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) Yes, Sir;

(b) A retired employee of Air India had been appointed as a consultant from October 1997 by Air India. His appointment has since been terminated on 15.04.2000. He was one of the officers named in the report dated 21.12.98 of the Chief Vigilance Officer of Air India in Atmaram Mansion (former Scindia House) case for certain alleged lapses. However, no loss to Air India can be attributed to this appointment.

Replacement of Aircraft by AI and IA

3813. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the news-item titled "Airbus Industry hopes to clinch Rs. 10,000 crores deal" which appeared in the Indian Express dated 15th March, 2000;

(b) whether it is a fact that Government propose to sell forty aircraft to replace the ageing fleet of Indian Airlines and Air India; and

(c) if so, the amount of expenditure involved in replacement of aircrafts and in what manner Government propose to finance the purchase of new aircrafts especially when Air India and Indian Airlines are financially not so strong?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

Staff average in AI

3814. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether overstaffing has been one of Air India's problem areas and the Airline has over 700 people to serve each of its 24 aircraft as compared to the industry average of 300 persons per aircraft;

(b) whether the cost of Air India staff in 1997-98 at Rs. 832 crore was 20 per cent of its gross expenses;

(c) if so, what is the percentage of staff cost to gross expenses for the year 1999-2000; and

(d) what steps Government are taking to reduce the staff strength of Air India so as to bring it at par with the industry average?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) Yes, Sir;

(b) and (c) The staff cost excluding crew cost in Air India was 18.42% of gross expenses in 1997-98 and is expected to be 20.9% in 1999-2000.

(d) Air India has taken following steps for rationalising man power :—

(i) Freeze on external recruitment in non-operational categories;

(ii) Several posts of India based officers abroad have been abolished;